



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

of Indo-European civilisation must be sought for in the East, namely, the origin of the Greek, Latin, Celtic, Germanic, Slavonian, and Lithuanian languages. The origin of mythology, *i. e.*, of the primitive religion of these peoples; the origin of architecture, of the alphabet, of metallurgy, and of coining money.

2. At the most remote period which history can reach, the arts enumerated above were already flourishing in the East. The Western countries, namely, Greece, Italy, Spain, Gaul, Great Britain, Sweden, Denmark, and Germany, were then in a complete state of barbarism, scarcely emerging from the savage state; no trace, at all events, is found of a civilisation having another than an Eastern origin.

3. The Eastern civilisation has not been imported into Europe by purely commercial relations, and the establishment of isolated colonies and coast settlements. It was mainly imported by the immigration of tribes sufficiently numerous to leave on their passage from East to West traces of their passage—traces which are recognised by philologists, mythologists, and antiquaries, and of whom there exist some historical records. These tribes belonged mostly to the Arian race.

These three propositions are now accepted by all the learned bodies of Europe. The most eminent men, such as Humboldt, Grimm, Pott, Eugène Burnouf, Lassen, have admitted them as axioms. Let us, then, no longer discuss truths established by the masters of science. To whatever schools you may belong, whether you are partisans of the unity of the human species, or whether you admit two or three races distinct from the Arian, the propositions enunciated may be admitted by all independent of their predilections.

ASTRONOMICAL TRADITIONS.

IN the first volume of the *Memoirs of the Anthropological Society of London*, there is an interesting paper by Mr. Bollaert on the "Astronomy of the Red Man of the New World," the result at which the learned author arrives being that "assuredly the astronomical knowledge of the aboriginal Americans was of domestic origin; and any of the few points of seeming contact with the calendars of the Old World, if not accidental, must have taken place at an exceedingly remote period of time."

In the work before us,* we have an inquiry into the most ancient

* "Mazzaroth; or the Constellations." In four parts. To which is added "Mizraim; or the Astronomy of Egypt." Illustrated by lithographs of the Planisphere of Dendere, and the Zodiac of Esné. By the late F. Rolleston. New Brighton: 1865.

astronomy of the Old World, not, however, dealing with the primitive calendars or physical theories of the past, but with what would seem to be more ancient still, namely, the apparently fanciful names given to certain groups of stars called constellations, and the meaning of the corresponding extraordinary figures which we find delineated on the celestial globe. The calendars of all nations—making allowance for differences of latitude, and consequent differences in the recurrence of certain visible phenomena of the sun, moon, and stars—might antecedently be expected more or less to agree. But nothing can or will be imagined more entirely arbitrary than the signs of the zodiac, and other constellations. Excepting, perhaps, the Pleiades, Orion, and the Great Bear, there are no groups of stars in the northern hemisphere that in a marked manner connect themselves together; and were half-a-dozen independent observers required to endeavour to form them into separate groups, the chances are infinite that there would not be the least resemblance in the results. Perhaps, too, the last thing that any of them would think of would be to find any resemblance to men, women, or animals among the stars. Orion may be considered as something like a sandglass; the Great Bear as like a cart or wain, or in the reverse way, like a plough; and hence the popular names in England and Scotland of “Charles’s Wain”, and “Peter’s Plough”, but any resemblance to the “great bear” will be sought for in vain. It is also well known that attempts have been made to get rid of the “arbitrary divisions” of the stars into “the constellations”, and to connect them, with reference to their actual appearances, by lines, and angles, and triangles; though all such attempts have hitherto failed.

The closely printed volume before us furnishes us with a theory, or *rationale*, of the names given to the signs of the zodiac and other constellations, which, to say the least, is remarkable, and which certainly disposes of the arbitrariness we are apt to assign to the grouping of the stars. It is certainly the most consistent account that has ever been put forward of the origin and real meaning of the constellations as figured upon the celestial globe.

The title of the work is taken from the 32nd verse of the 38th chapter of the Book of Job: “Canst thou bring forth *Mazzaroth* in his season?” In the margin of the English Bible we find that *Mazzaroth* is rendered “the twelve signs”; and the word is a feminine or neuter plural noun, meaning *chambers* or *separate divisions*; such as are the *constellations* “Mazaloth”, with which the word is sometimes identified, signifies “the way through which anything goes”, as the sun through the zodiac. It occurs only once in the Bible, in 2 Kings, xxiii, 5, where it is rendered “the planets”, but as “the twelve signs” in the margin.

The author of *Mazzaroth* professes to establish—and certainly not without a vast accumulation of proof—that the names and figures assigned to the constellations are, as it were, hieroglyphic embodiments of the great truths of revealed religion first made known to Adam and Seth in Paradise and after the Fall; and that these formed the primæval teaching of mankind generally, and thus became the foundation of the various myths and traditions of all peoples throughout the world. The subject is a very large one to examine in detail; but we may apply one significant test which is furnished by the accomplished author. Taking the twelve signs of the zodiac we shall find that they correspond very strikingly with the imagery in Jacob's dying blessing; and the Hebrew tradition is that he spoke of them as the appointed cognisances of his twelve sons, which were borne as the standards of Israel in the wilderness.

Although we admit that, as we have said above, the author has endeavoured to accumulate a vast amount of proof in favour of his theory, we fail to perceive that the arguments employed are of such a nature as to carry conviction to the reader's mind. It is attempted to prove that a certain coincidence exists between the form of the constellations and the events narrated in various Semitic traditions. To do this, a great amount of learning is brought to bear on the subject, and the pages are covered with classical, Hebrew, and Arabic quotations, Hudibrastic verse, and references to many curious subjects bearing upon general science, but which have been hitherto unconnected with astronomical investigations. From these topics, of which we may say *sunt bona, sunt quadam mediocria, sunt mala plura*, we may cull a few elegant extracts. We are told, speaking of the early Christians, "So the beautiful token of their faith, the passion-flower, was worn by them for the same purpose," etc. (p. 107). Considering that the passion-flower was not known until after the discovery of America by Columbus, we are a little surprised at the above statement. However, we shall prefer to give an extract which will give a clearer notion of the author's style than we could adequately describe to our readers:—

"The primitive year began in the sign Virgo, the stars of which were seen most strikingly in the evening sky when the sun was in Aries, the splendid star still by us called Spica, the ear of corn, in the woman's hand, marking the leading idea, the Promised Seed. Thus was represented the subject of the first promise, the foundation of the hopes of fallen man. In the next sign, Libra, we have His work, which was to be to buy, to redeem, figured in the balance weighing the price against the purchase. Then in Scorpio follows the indication of what that price was to be; the conflict, in which the seed of the woman receives the wound in his heel, while his other

foot is on the head of the enemy, here figured by the scorpion, a venomous reptile, who can sting even while his head is bruised."

Certainly the train of ideas which a contemplation of the sign *Libra* is presumed to evoke, is a little complex. How the idea of a balance necessarily implies the idea of price and purchase we fail to perceive, as we confess that scales have always been associated in our mind simply with the idea of weight. But the *petitio principii* by which the constellation *Ophiuchus* (which is nowhere in the book demonstrated to represent the "seed of the woman") is identified as the emblem of the Hebrew idea of the Messiah, is to our mind shamefully manifest. And again, further on in the book, it is the serpent in the hand of *Ophiuchus* who represents the Evil One; but here we are told that he is typified by the sign *Scorpio*. Now, either there must be two devils,—the admission of which fact would be exceedingly inconvenient,—or else the same personage is represented by two distinct emblems, which would be highly improbable. If *Ophiuchus* is, as stated on p. 19, the "human figure grasping the serpent, treading on the scorpion," and both serpent and scorpion are manifestations of the same enemy, it is an unwarrantable exercise of his diabolic supernatural attributes to be at the same time in the man's hands as a serpent and under his feet as a scorpion. This is really one of those things "no fellow can understand."

We can scarcely congratulate our author upon his philology; we see that he derives Scandinavian words directly from Hebrew roots; and we observe Arabic, Hebrew, Chaldee, and Syriac reciprocally interchanged with a confidence quite alarming. As, however, the writer has exhibited a dexterous ingenuity in contriving to misspel nearly every word quoted from foreign languages, less evil may result from these pleasing recreations than might at first be supposed. But it is really too bad when we are told that Hela, the Scandinavian goddess, from whom the word *hell* is derived, "has had her name from the primitive root *Hel*, to which Æschylus appears to allude in the Agamemnon when he speaks of Helen"!!! "Helen is here referred to the primitive root, to destroy; but it is more likely that she had been named from to shine, whence Ἥλιος, the sun." If such a derivation can be imagined from such a root, we must admit that such words as eel, elder, elbow, heeltap, highlow, island, highlander, Elohim, ell, and hundreds of others of equally ridiculous affinity, have all been derived from the common Hebrew root.

We have a right to complain of the suppression which the author makes of all reference to early American astronomy. If there is any reference in the astronomy of the Shemites or the Aryans to the traditions or the hopes alluded to in the bible, early Mexican traditions

should also bear some reference to the sacred narratives. Let us, then, take one of the Mexican "phases of the moon", and see whether it bears any similarity to the astronomy of Europe, Western Asia, or even of China:—

"In a group from the *Fejevary Codex* is represented the state in which they portrayed the phases of the moon, according to the Aztec mythology. We first see the sun and the moon quarreling; the next group shows the defects of the moon, which, in the third group, is swallowed by the sun; the fourth figure represents the triumphant sun; in the fifth, the conqueror spits the head of the moon out as symbol of the first quarter" (Bollaert, *Mem. Anthropol. Soc. Lond.*, vol. i, p. 217).

We cannot say that this grotesque combination of emblems represents any especial tradition; yet we recollect that these and other far more absurd legends form part of the intellectual heritage of thousands of living savages.

The appeal which is continually made to the admitted coincidence between the traditions of Christianity and Buddhism is repeated *usque ad nauseam*. The possibility, on the one hand, of the later system having owed many of its peculiar tenets to the more early form of faith, our author apparently does not contemplate. Still less does he give in these comparisons due weight to the fact that the early Christian missionaries, in Buddhist countries, have left in Thibet traces of their presence, which have led to the perpetuation of customs and ceremonies foreign to the innate precepts of the Buddhist religion. And we are not surprised to observe in the passages which treat on this subject an intolerance towards those who differ from the writer, which is only justified by the fact that his knowledge of mediæval history is nearly equal in excellence to his acquaintance with philology or botany.

Considering that the whole work bears the mark of crude conception, ill-considered plan, and imperfect arrangement, and observing that no reference is made to those authorities who have most illustrated the subject, we regret that any theories on a matter of such supreme anthropological importance as the investigation of early traditions, should have been attempted without a due contemplation of the difficulties to be encountered, and the object to be attained by the study of the names and figures of the ancient constellations.
